



# Gang Information Guide

Provided by the Greensboro Police Department

## What is a “gang”?

A group or association that consists of at least but not limited to three or more persons who may or may not have a common identifying name, sign, or symbol and who collectively or individually engage in, have engaged in or have attempted to engage in criminal activity that creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity includes juvenile behaviors and actions that if committed by an adult would be a crime. Gang members could be male or female. Gangs of today are accepting more and more females into full membership.

## How old are gang members?

The average range is 14-26, but research has discovered that members as young as 8 years old and as old as 50 years old have been reported. The older gang members are usually called **OG's** (original gangsters) and the younger ones soldiers.

## How do you become a member of a gang?

**Blessed In:** the child is accepted into the gang because family members are current members.

**Jumped In:** a high-ranking member directs other members to inflict brutal beatings on the child. The child could even be stabbed or even shot as a way to be accepted.

**Criminal Acts:** a high-ranking member directs the child to complete a task. The task could range from a simple act of tagging (the act of spray painting gang symbols) on a building, armed robber, or even murder.

## How are gangs structured?

All gangs have different levels of membership. The different levels indicate status with the gang's organization. The illustration below depicts a typical gang structure:

**Leader**

**Hardcore**

**Associate**

**Fringe**

**Wanna Bes**

**Cliques**



**Leader:** The leader(s) of a gang is all-powerful. The leader(s) set the level and determines the types of criminal activities.

**Hard Core:** The hard-core gang members are usually older, who are deeply enmeshed in the gang and are at risk of being so for life. The hardcore members commit a large percentage of the violent criminal acts.

**Associate:** The associate gang members have been through the initiation process and have made some level of personal commitment to the gang and strives to reach the status of hard core.

**Fringe:** The fringe gang members move in and out of the gang. They are able to function in both gang and everyday activities and have not made the life commitment.

**Wanna Bes:** Wanna Bes are what the name implies, they want to be a member. They associate with gang members and imitate gang life.

**Cliques:** The clique is a group of associate, fringe, and often wanna be gang members who gravitate around one or more of the hard core gang members. This resembles a gang but does not contain the entire gang structure. This group is usually seen in schools.

## Why do kids join gangs?

Kids join gangs for several reasons; some to meet needs that are not being met in the child's home, school, or community.

Gangs can replace fear with security, lack of direction with structure, and supply the discipline that is missing at home.

Love, attention, praise, and discipline are major building blocks in the development of a child and can be given from all areas of a child's life (home, school, and community).

## What does a person get from joining a gang?

<b>Acceptance</b>	children want to be chosen and to be part of something
<b>Protection</b>	children want to be protected
<b>Identity</b>	children want their own identity
<b>Fellowship</b>	children want to have friends
<b>Excitement</b>	children crave excitement
<b>Intimidation</b>	learn to use this as an alternative to get what they need and or want
<b>Respect</b>	members demand respect and use violence or the threat of violence to get it
<b>Financial</b>	making easy money has a major influence

## Risk factors for identifying potential gang members

Although an exact warning model does not exist, a child that displays two to three or more of the listed behaviors may be more likely to explore gang membership.

- ✓ Poor academic performance
- ✓ Any interest in school is switched to new friends
- ✓ Getting in trouble with police/law enforcement
- ✓ Disciplinary action becoming more frequent at home and or school
- ✓ An increase in conflict at home with parents
- ✓ Large unsupervised periods of time
- ✓ Gang dress and or dressing in an imitating way

- ✓ Tattoos that could be just drawings on the body or the real thing
- ✓ The use of sign language
- ✓ Drawing or sketching graffiti on notebooks, desks, or walls
- ✓ Obsession with violent movies, video games, and music

### What does a gang member look like?

Gang members dress in a way to show an outward representation of their gang affiliation. What members refer to as “representing” can be done in several ways:

- ✓ Constant use of one color
- ✓ One pant leg or shirt sleeve rolled up
- ✓ Belt buckle pulled over to one side
- ✓ One shoe laced up and one left loose
- ✓ Lines shaved into one eye brow or the side of the head
- ✓ Gang related symbols drawn on clothing
- ✓ Ear or nose ring on one side of the head
- ✓ Do-rag or bandana tied to one side of the head
- ✓ Bandana worn hanging out of the back pocket
- ✓ Tattoos of gang symbols or street names

### Tips to aid in the prevention of gang involvement

- ✓ Know who your child associates with. Meet your child's friends and their parents.
- ✓ Get involved with your child's school, sports, and church activities.
- ✓ Talk with your child in positive ways and praise them often.
- ✓ Set limits! Learn to say “no”. Unacceptable behavior that is allowed to continue becomes acceptable behavior.
- ✓ Don't allow your child to dress in gang style clothing.
- ✓ Don't allow your child to stay out roaming the streets late at night.
- ✓ Monitor the TV, movies, music, and video games your child obsesses over.
- ✓ Learn about gang activity in your area and be a good role model for your child.

## Possible signs of drug use

Gangs and drugs often go hand in hand. One could be a warning sign of the other.

- ✓ Change in friends
- ✓ Negative changes in schoolwork, missing school, or declining grades
- ✓ Increased secrecy about possessions or activities
- ✓ Use on incense, room deodorizer, or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odors
- ✓ Subtle changes in conversations with friends (e.g. more secretive, using coded language)
- ✓ Fascination with clothes that highlight drug use
- ✓ Increase in borrowing money
- ✓ Evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers, cigars, etc.
- ✓ Evidence of use of inhalant products (such as hairspray, nail polish, correction fluid, common household products); rags and paper bags are sometimes used as accessories
- ✓ Bottles of eye drops, which may be used to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils
- ✓ New use of breath mints or mouthwash to cover up the smell of alcohol



### For more information

The first step in any prevention or intervention effort is education. Please contact any of the following for more information:

**Greensboro Police Department**  
**373-3676 or 373-3686**

**Greensboro Parks and Recreation – Hope Project**  
**297-5019**